



Severe Weather Preparedness

Severe weather will happen, and eventually it will affect you in some way. So the only thing you can do is to try and be prepared the best you can. There are no easy answers to the many questions and problems that can arise. You have to prepare for your situation with the resources you have available.

Step 1: Identify the severe weather hazards you may face.

In the Central United States, severe thunderstorms are a fact of life. These storms can produce tornadoes, damaging wind gusts, large hail, and heavy rain that can produce flash flooding. At some point in your life, you will likely be faced with one of these hazards.

Step 2: Set up your plan.

Everyone should have a severe weather plan for their home. Likewise, businesses need to have a plan for the workplace. There will be similarities, but there will also be differences between the two. Following are some ideas that can be applied to both.

1. Establish who is responsible for the plan. Someone needs to be in charge. For a large workplace that runs several shifts, you may have several people responsible for the plan.
2. How will you receive weather warnings? NOAA Weather Radio is a great way to receive severe weather warnings from the National Weather Service. You can also get information from the commercial media, and the Internet. There are also services today that will send weather warning directly to cell phones. Do not depend solely on one method. Have multiple ways to receive critical weather information.
3. If you receive a weather warning such that you need to activate your plan, how will you inform the people you are responsible for? In a home that should not be a problem, but in a large workplace you have to have a method for communicating the severe weather information to everyone present. This is also important at large gatherings, such as sporting events or county fairs.
4. Establish shelter areas in your home or workplace. Depending on the amount of people who need to be sheltered, multiple areas may be needed. For large events, depending on time available, it is usually better to have people stay instead of rushing to their automobiles. If your home or building is in an area prone to flooding, you need to have an evacuation plan in place.

Step 3: Practice your plan!

Conduct drills and then review the drill to find strengths and weaknesses and make improvements where necessary. It is hard to foresee every circumstance, but drills can often bring out problems that were not previously seen.

Additional family protection items

- Have a family disaster plan. A plan will cover what to do, where to meet, and how to contact family members in the event of a fire or severe weather. Give emergency information to babysitters and other caregivers.
- Put together an emergency supply kit for your home, your office, and your car. A kit should have bottled water, a radio with extra batteries, a flashlight, prescription medicine and first aid supplies.
- Purchase a generator for your home or business. A generator can provide some basic electric service until the commercial power returns. A generator can also keep health equipment functioning (ventilators, oxygen, monitors) during a power outage. Remember to always follow the instructions when using a generator. For example, never use a generator in a closed structure. The engine gives off deadly carbon monoxide gas. **Always place the generator outside.**
- Make sure all family members know all possible ways to exit your home and where to meet outside the house. Keep all exits clear.
- Choose a place for your family to meet after a disaster in case you are at work or school when the disaster happens.
- Know how to contact your children at their school or daycare and where you can pick them up after a disaster. Designate a specific person to pick up your child if you cannot. Make sure the school or daycare has the most current emergency release information.
- Have a tone-alert weather radio to receive severe weather warnings. Also have a portable radio with extra batteries in case there are power outages. This allows you to get the most current weather and emergency information quickly.
- Learn first aid and CPR.
- In the event of a flood, tornado or earthquake, learn how to shut off your water, gas and electricity. Know where to find the shut-off valves and switches.
- Keep a small amount of cash on hand. ATM's will not operate if the power is out.
- Keep your gas tank full. If the power is out, gas pumps will not operate.